

BOOK OF ENCOURAGEMENT



Words of encouragement
for ordinary people

BOOK
OF
ENCOURAGEMENT

Individual responses to the question:

"What helps you when you are going through a difficult time?"

Compiled by Stephanie Wilkinson

Any omissions of acknowledgement will gladly be corrected in future editions.

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Foreword

As Pastor of Teddington Baptist Church it is a great privilege to write the foreword for this 'Book of Encouragement'. However, in reality I am but one pastor amongst many, for the church is called to function as a *mutually* supportive community. A little word of encouragement here and a helping hand there does more to hold the church together than the words or actions of any single individual. The power of these words and actions is greatly disproportionate to their size. When it comes to encouraging each other, a little definitely goes a long way!

In the pages that follow, you will find encouragement in all shapes and sizes. There are ancient words and modern words; poetic words and practical wisdom. The one unifying factor is that they have been tested. Those who have submitted these contributions have proved their trustworthiness in the reality of daily life. Read on, and then, as Jesus said, "go thou and do likewise".

Rev. Richard Littledale

Preface

This book is dedicated to anyone who is in need of encouragement. We all go through difficult times and encouragement doesn't always come just when you need it - perhaps others around you don't realise you are struggling, or you may be feeling too proud or vulnerable to ask. This book is intended to offer you comfort and courage as you realise that others have been there before you and have somehow found a way through their bad days.

Stephanie Wilkinson

Particularly in times of sadness, I listen to contemplative music, specifically the CD 'Agnus Dei' (subtitled, 'Music of Inner Harmony').

Brenda Kenny

For everyone, but especially new mums and dads:

Try to remember that this, whatever you are going through now will not last. The crying will stop. And most importantly of all, if you feel yourself approaching the boundary of that imaginary safety line, ask someone for help. Stand strong in the meantime and talk as often as you can to God and believe more than you've ever believed before in love - especially in the love of your child/children. There is no shame in asking for help. There is no shame in wanting to be, or indeed being, a good mother. Life can ambush any of us at surprising times throughout our journey here. Our children can sometimes test our defences. But, more than this - much more - they are our greatest joy.

Kim Dutta

I find encouragement in listening to Christian songs on Premier Radio. Testimonies also help me, for example, that of Joni Eareckson Tada, who had a diving accident when she was a teenager in which she broke her neck. She is now a quadriplegic confined to a wheelchair, but has a ministry to those who suffer.

I find having a warm bath relaxing.

Writing a letter to a friend helps to put the difficult times in proportion with the good things that are happening.

Cathy Mearman

'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful. Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.' (Jeremiah 31:3-5)

Matthew Harris

Just walking in my garden
with all its happy memories
gives me a great feeling of
hope and peace for the
future.

Molly Worzencraft

Read and understand the verses of the hymn, What a Friend We Have in Jesus -

'Take it to the Lord in prayer'.

Anonymous

I'm tempted to reply "going out for a run" - though recently it was an injury that kept me from running that was itself the cause of the problem! Generally, however, if some particular thought is bugging me, then going out for a run can be a great way of letting go of the problem - by the time the run is over, I've either stopped worrying about it, or am able to look at it from a different perspective.

If the problem is more than just a minor irritation, what often helps me is being able to talk about it with somebody else. And then to pray about it with them, or be prayed for by them. Going back to that recent injury, I felt a great sense of encouragement in knowing that others were praying for me even though they weren't actually there with me.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

Richard Nerurkar

If I believe half of what I'm
told by strangers - then I
probably believe too much!

John Kenny

I find that if I focus only on today and give tomorrow to the Lord then things are easier to cope with, because usually by the time tomorrow becomes today, it has already been taken care of. I also try to remember that nothing is too big or too small for God to deal with. All things are possible through God.

Siobhan Crowther



I have to share my problem. When I hold things in they churn around and cause pain. I offer it up to God. I pray for someone to share with. I go out, if possible, so I can meet with people. Sometimes you find people with similar experiences. Mostly, people who will just listen and pray for you. We must allow people to care and pray for each other. God will bless you both.

Pam Chapman

I like to read Joshua 1:6-9 - a promise which God has given to me at many significant moments in my life:

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Richard Littledale

'I will not, I will not, I will not, in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake you, nor relax my hold on you, assuredly not.'
(Hebrews 13:5)

Susan Rand

My job involves a significant amount of travelling overseas and so I am often staying in hotels for periods from a few days up to a fortnight. I have developed a routine for checking into a new hotel room that involves a quick look around to make sure everything is working and to see where the fire exits are. Then, before I unpack my bag, I search through all the drawers until I find the prize - the Gideon Bible! Almost always it is in the drawer with the telephone directory. Sometimes it is a little dusty, sometimes it is with the Koran or the sayings of Buddha, but it is almost always there. I have come to rely on its presence so much that I save weight by not packing my own Bible anymore.

A few months ago I was in Oslo for a meeting of thirty engineers from seven different oil companies. I had organised the meeting and was going to chair it. The night before it started I was alone in my hotel room and I was feeling very nervous about the coming days. I reached for the Gideon Bible and looked in the 'Helps' section at the front, which recommended some verses to give 'peace in time of anxiety':

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Philipians 4:6-7.

As I read it a great peace came over me and I was able to get a good night's sleep.

Mike Wilkinson

When things get on top, do something else, then go to bed. It's easier to cope with in the morning.

Trevor King

Poems have encouraged me at different times. One entitled 'A Quiet Mind' by Amy Carmichael in particular reminds me that God is in control of all areas of my life, if I trust Him.

Louise Harper

My best option for being encouraged is to escape to the countryside and absorb God's handiwork in nature. In the context of a busy life this is not always possible and I do find friends and sometimes complete strangers to be of great encouragement. I think if you ask God to encourage you and then look out for the answer, encouragement can come from almost anyone and anywhere!

Anon

Prayer and lines of hymns encourage me:

Jesus only is my/our refuge
I take it to the Lord in prayer
In His arms He'll take and shield me
I will find a solace there

"I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's
power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me."

(Methodist Hymn Book 1933)

Beryl Meier



I try to remember that God always wants to be kinder to me than I am to myself, so I go to bed early with a treasured sachet of Cadbury's Options (brought from England), a pile of magazines and Handel's Water Music. It helps me also to concentrate on the little things in life that give me pleasure; trees, a doner kebab, evening falling across the valley. I give myself little treats like a new bottle of nail varnish or a phone call to England. I look at my old diaries and remember how God has met with me in past struggles and I write everything down until I feel better.

Debbie Jenkins - Turkey

There are many things in my life that often sadden me and make life difficult and lonely, but there are three things that help me carry on. Firstly, the love of my Lord whom I constantly talk to, especially when I cannot confide in anyone else - He is always there for me and I'm lucky enough to know that. Secondly, that He blessed me with two fine sons which I thank Him for constantly - the oldest loving, kind and sensitive to all around him, young and old; the second also loving and funny - the comedian of my family. They have both enriched any good in me. Thirdly, the old ladies I look after and my friends in the church who constantly amaze me with the things they teach me and the love I get from them all. How lucky I am to be so rich in all the above. Thanks be to God.

Sharon Cogley

I have a card on my kitchen cupboard which says: 'Lord help me to remember that nothing is going to happen today that You and I together can't handle.' This is a great comfort and helped me when I was going through a difficult time. At these times too, it is so encouraging to know that friends and family are praying for you.

Joan Blyth

There are several things that encourage me:

Home and family and the thought, if I am away, that eventually I shall return there.

Humour - it has often helped me and still does.

The knowledge that the Lord is with me.

The church family and particularly those who have the natural gift of encouragement.

Particular passages of scripture, eg Jude verses 24,25.

"To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore. Amen."

Ernie Holder

When my husband died I thought, "I am alone and lonely", but I was greatly mistaken. Jesus was there for me and He let me know that He would comfort and guide me all my days. How great it is for all of us to know He is there to help us in all our needs, whenever we pray in His name.

Audrey Taylor

I remember that God said, 'I will never leave you', then I get involved in a job that takes some energy and finish with having a cup of tea.

Anon

When it's very hard to wait for something and you are really uncertain about the outcome, I have found Psalm 27:13,14 helpful:

"I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Elizabeth Hicks

Praying and reading the word of God helps me when I am going through a difficult time, as prayer moves mountains and barriers in our spiritual lives.

Boaz Kisang - Kenya



I tell myself: 'this too will pass' and 'brighter days are up ahead'.

I also find great encouragement in knowing someone else is praying for me.

Keeping occupied and being with other people stops me dwelling on things that are bothering me.

Steph Wilkinson

One thing I have learned from God during times of difficulty is to lean on his faithful love. God never forsakes His people even when we are so wicked.

"My flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Psalm 73:26

Irene Lumika, Kenya

When I was 21, I was doing my National Service in the RAF. I had finished my training as a Nursing Orderly and had been posted to a large base in Suffolk. On my first day, I was introduced to the team and, to my surprise, the first comment made by my sergeant was, 'I see you are Non-Conformist, Hawkins.'

I said, 'Yes'.

His reply was, 'Then how do you explain that your God let my father die screaming in agony from cancer?' (Remember I was only 21).

I thought, 'What can I say? Here I am among complete strangers.' I asked God for help and I found myself saying, 'Nowhere in my Bible am I promised an easy or straightforward life, but what I am told is that if I believe and trust in the Lord I will get through, no matter what is thrown at me.'

The silence was stunning but, more importantly, I have had many things to pull me down but I have always followed the Lord's word to me. Whatever life has thrown at me, I have trusted Him and come through.

Geoff Hawkins

When I was 10 years old my father died. These words were not a comfort at first, in fact I got confused between my own father and Father God in Heaven. But now at night when I can't sleep for sadness, worry etc, I try to recall them:

I heard a song at close of day when all was hushed in rest.
It seemed to float from far away beyond the purple west.
I know not if some choir on earth murmured that soft refrain,
Or if some harmony had birth within my heart and brain.

Peace I leave with you, peace I leave with you,
My peace I give unto you, my peace
Not as the world giveth, giveth I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

My father's voice is calling me deep down within my heart.
He bids me give myself to Thee, Thine own in heart and
mind.

My child, my child, I hear that voice declare
Oh come to me, I died for thee, and oh I love thee so.

Nancy Baker

Prayer works, although the answer may not be quite what was hoped for or expected. As the American General said at the time of the Gulf War, 'There are no atheists in a foxhole!'

Put the problem on your 'overnight computer', ie sleep on it. If you have had a shock you need to give yourself time to acclimatise to it and to settle down.

Prayer does not have to be formal or spoken, although we must all be grateful to those who lead us in open prayer, especially in times of great stress such as bereavement.

Cyril Sprake

The Barnabas of My Life - My Wife

In times of doubt and uncertainty she has always been there for me. She always wants the best and shows genuine interest and love for me. Scripture verses are very helpful at times but the practical outworking of situations is reality. With the One who says 'I AM' and the life with the one who is my wife - what a relationship for encouragement.

A Grateful Husband

Life is mainly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.

Adam Lindsay Gordon 1833-1870

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

William Cowper 1731-1800

As my old granny used to tell me, when she was force-feeding me tapioca pudding or, worse, seed cake, "There's always someone else worse off than yourself!" At those moments, I did not believe a word of it.

And can we possibly take any encouragement from other people's unhappiness? Is the Christian life a series of comparisons, "Well, at least I'm not as bad as him!", "Anyway, I don't do that". Jesus was pretty specific on that one: "...God, I thank you that I am not like all other men...", says the Pharisee.

But my times of discouragement can bring to mind others who, like me, could probably do with a lift. I am prone to sitting down and writing a handful of notes to anyone who comes into my head. Not saying much, just "Hi, how are you, thinking of you...". The satisfaction of a neat pile of stamped envelopes does me a lot of good, and getting them usually does no harm to the recipients!

"It is better to give than to receive." My granny would agree, especially in the very act of giving me the seed cake.

Graham Hayman



A candle loses
nothing by lighting
another candle.

Anon

You will not always succeed in everything you do. You need to learn by making mistakes and using the lessons learned.

Trevor King

*I read my Bible every now
and again in the evening
and say a prayer to the
Lord when things get
difficult.*

David Hawkins

Facts to encourage you:

Napoleon was 42nd in his class.

Sir Isaac Newton was next to lowest in his form; he failed geometry.

George Eliot learned to read with great difficulty.

Oliver Goldsmith was bottom of his class.

James Watt was the butt of jokes by his schoolmates.

Trevor King

Do things seem impossible and does it seem as though God is a million miles away and you wonder whether he really cares for you? I felt like this not so long ago. I found it really difficult to pray but I did ask God to give me some form of encouragement. The next day I got home and found a letter from a dear friend. At the end of the letter she quoted Psalm 55:22: "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you." I gave my burdens to the Lord and prayed that I would not be tempted to take them back, but let him take care of them. Thank God for Christian friends whom he uses to encourage us!

Judi Cogger

Moments of discouragement can creep up on me, and no more so than when I feel that the great freedom which the Christian faith promises is apparently the very opposite.

When the great Spirit God is reduced to a caricature, when legalism seems to be the driving imperative, when a narrow exclusivity takes over, I feel hemmed in, I get twitchy.

I often return, in fact or in memory, to books and writers who have written stuff that made me leap to my feet shouting "Yes!" In the past it was 'Honest to God' by John Robinson and 'Your God is too Small' by J B Phillips; more recently it has been 'What's so Amazing about Grace?' by Philip Yancey. They are writings which help me grope towards the unattainable - a knowledge of the fullness of Christ.

There are some moments of discouragement which go too low for words. When these occur, I make sure that my next golf game is against someone I know I can beat. And I do more - I practise on the quiet!

Graham Hayman

What encourages me is when people can be open, honest and real. We wear too many masks at church - you would think it was a spiritual gift! I think this puts many people off, either from joining us, or from opening up and sharing the things that are of real concern. I think it is sad that people are like this, especially at church!

At church we can be certain we are all sinners and we know we are - so you would think it would be the one place that people could feel safe enough to open up and be honest. I am encouraged when people do - and when people feel that I am honest and real enough for them to open up to me.

Sarah Hill

LORD, YOU DO

A written down prayer
Who do I write for?
Who indeed would care?
Lord, you do.

A written down fear
A hope to restore
Security so dear
Lord, you do.

A written down smile
Knowing you are near.
Live with me a while?
Lord, you do.

A written down sigh
Flowing to a tear
No one saying why?
Lord, you do.

Anon
(Contributed by Sara and Jonathan Oliver)

The thing that encourages me is that, when I go to sleep at night, I can wake up in the morning and it's the start of a new day. Whatever has happened the day before can be faced afresh in the light of a new day. I think that God feels the same way, because it says in the Bible that his mercies are new every morning. We start each new day with a clean slate and it is up to us to make the most of the new day.

Tony Finerty

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